

## **CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION**

The Charter Revision Commission met at the Wethersfield Town Manager's Conference Room on Thursday, September 18, 2014 at 6:30 pm.

Present: Chairperson Dan Silver, Vice Chairperson Steve Kirsche, Louis Laccavole, Mary Pelletier, Mike Zaleski and T. William Knapp

Also Present: Town Manager Jeff Bridges

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Silver at 6:34 pm.

Due to the lack of quorum at the September 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, Chairperson Silver asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the June 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- **Commissioner Zaleski moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Pelletier. All Commissioners present voted. Motion passed. 4-0-2 (Chairperson Silver and Commissioner Knapp abstained as they did not attend the referenced meeting.)**

Chairperson Silver asked if anyone had any motions regarding the minutes from the last (September 4<sup>th</sup>) meeting.

- Vice Chairperson Kirsche referred to a sentence on page 3 where it is stated that he felt that a financial czar as opposed to an independent business manager would be laudable. He does not recall saying that and it does not reflect his current view. As such, he would like that sentence removed.
- **Vice Chairperson Kirsche moved to accept the minutes as amended to remove the sentence "*He feels that a financial 'czar' as opposed to an independent business manager is laudable,*" seconded by Commissioner Knapp. All Commissioners present voted. Motion passed. 5-0-1 (Commissioner Zaleski abstained as he was not present at said meeting.)**

### *Public Comment.*

- Paul Copp (100 Executive Sq)
  - Mr. Copp requested that meeting notification dates and times be posted as quickly as possible so that there is more publicity and more people can attend. He also feels that as far as shared services, the Commission should consider one Financial Manager, one Director of Engineering and Facilities, one I.T. Director for the Town, etc.
- David Caruk (149 Broad St)
  - Mr. Caruk stated that he does not feel that the meeting was adequately publicized. He also feels that the agenda as given to him is very unclear and that the items should be better explained so that the public can better understand what is being discussed.
- Robert Young (20 Coppermill Rd)
  - Mr. Young spoke on shared services and his opinion that it may be helpful to contact the Town's accountancy firm, Blum Shapiro, for some possible insight as to how other communities handle their shared services. He also said the State's accountancy board may have some helpful information. It is his feeling that the Town should have one Finance Director, but that shared services should be broader than just that position.

## Agenda Items

### A) Continued Discussion of Section 6

- Chairperson Silver recapped the last meeting's discussion on Chapter 6 for Commissioner Zaleski who was not present on that date.
- The Commission discussed whether it was within their scope to address shared services in the Charter, with Chairperson Silver & Commissioner Pelletier feeling that it wasn't. Commissioners Pelletier and Zaleski also expressed reluctance to add a new, permanent, high-level position.
- Vice Chairperson Kirsche stated that it was his understanding that there would not be a new position created but rather a redefinition of the duties of the current Finance Director and that he report to the Council as opposed to the Town Manager. Commissioners Laccavole & Knapp were in accordance with this.
- Town Manager Bridges stated that the model does not really allow for one person that can trump a decision of the Superintendant or Business/Finance Manager for the Schools.
- **Vice Chairperson Kirsche moved to leave Section 601 as-is and move on, seconded by Commissioner Knapp. All Commissioners present voted "AYE" unanimously. Motion passed. 6-0-0**

### B) Discussion and Vote on Sections 6, 7, 8 and 9

- Vice Chairperson Kirsche offered a suggestion that the Director of Physical Services also be the Director of Public Works (currently Town Manager Bridges). Town Manager Bridges indicated that Public Works is a function of Physical Services and Engineering and that the way they are now works well.
- Chairperson Silver asked if having the section on the Department of Health was redundant now that it was regionalized. Town Manager Bridges as well as other members of the Commission stated that it made sense to leave it in as it could revert back to the Town at any time.
- Commissioner Pelletier asked if language pertaining to regional cooperation should be included with any other departments, as in the Department of Health, and would the language not the being in the Charter preclude the Town from doing so.
- Commissioner Laccavole referred to Section 510 which pertains to the "advisory" Parks and Recreation Board, and then to Section 604 which states that the director of Parks and Recreation must gain the approval of the Board which shall make rules that have the force of law and are enforceable by the police. He feels this is inconsistent and would like clarification as to what the Board's role actually is. After a lengthy discussion, including the suggestion of eliminating the word "advisory" or eliminating the Board's requirement of approving anything the Director does, the Commission decided that it would be best to ask the Director of Parks & Recreation and the Chairperson of the Parks & Recreation Board to obtain clarification of the Board's role and functions prior to considering any changes to the Charter. Chapter 6 was tabled pending this discussion.
- Vice Chairperson Kirsche asked about section 706 in regards to a balanced relationship between receipts and expenditures, and whether the Charter should contemplate the allocated amounts for emergencies. Town Manager Bridges explained that the Town is required by law to adopt a balanced budget and a contingency amount is a part of that budget. But there are also funds that are not allocated in the budget, the Unreserved Fund Balance, that are available to the Town. If the fund gets high enough, the Town has to make the decision of how to use it – paving, debt service, some other project, etc. He stated that the estimate of the fund balance, if the Commission would like it in

the Charter, would be appropriate in section 703(d). The Commissioners expressed concern that not requiring the declaration of the amount could lead to future problems. Town Manager Bridges then stated that the provision is already in the Charter (section 703(a)), but that it is called the Unencumbered Cash Surplus. He will speak to Finance Director O'Neil to obtain the correct name of the fund so that the Charter may be consistent with the Town's budget document.

- Vice Chairperson Kirsche asked about the Library Board's privileges on buying, as stated in section 712, and whether it should be limited to Library materials. Commissioner Laccavole stated that it was that way already. Chairperson Silver clarified that the Town cannot dictate how the Library Board spends their budget, although the Town allocates their funds.
- Commissioner Pelletier expressed her concern about section 710 and the last-minute spending or encumbering of unencumbered, appropriated funds by departments to avoid budgets being cut for the following year. She feels something should be done to curb this practice. The Commissioners discussed that this is usually spending has to go through an approval process.
- Commissioner Laccavole referred to sections 713 & 714 where notice of bids and proposals are required to be advertised in at least one newspaper with general circulation within the Town. He then referenced section 705 where there appears to be a typographical error omitting the word "newspaper." Section 308 also refers to advertising ordinance changes in a newspaper. He is concerned that posting in a newspaper is not enough given the increased use of other media, and the decline in newspaper use. He offered the suggestion of either/or, however the other Commissioners were concerned that there may be a State statute that requires inclusion in a newspaper and also that there is a generation that still reads the newspaper. The Commissioners would like to ask the Town Attorney for an opinion on this, whether other towns have done this and possible wording to include digital media.

#### *New Business*

- Commissioner Knapp wanted to address the fact the minutes of the meetings do not get posted until after approved by the Commission. He offered the suggestion of posting them ahead of time with the caveat that they say "unapproved." The Commission concluded that the minutes not be posted until approved so as to avoid any inconsistencies being released before being corrected.

*The next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 2, 2014 at 6:30 pm.*

**Vice Chairperson Kirsche moved for adjournment. Commissioner Knapp seconded. All those present voted "AYE" unanimously. The motion passed. 6-0-0**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Sónia Betz, Secretary